

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR AND CONGRESS OF INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATIONS

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AGRICULTURAL WORKERS ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

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October 6, 1961

BRACEROS' SIT-DOWN STRIKE AT GROWERS ASSOCIATION

RELEASE TO ALL MEDIA, #1

The current series of "wildcat" protests by Mexican Nationals in San Joaquin County, California, reached a new peak as ten braceros staged a sit-down strike at the headquarters of a growers' association.

The ten Mexican farm workers complained of "filthy conditions, cursing, and bad treatment" at three camps housing braceros, adding that labor contractors "treat us like animals in these camps". They demanded transfers to better camps and recognition of their right to choose a labor union to represent them.

San Joaquin Farm Production Association, a group of bracero-using growers, ordered the men back to Loduca & Perry camp, Calcagno camp and a camp in Tracy. Unless they went back, Association officials threatened, they would be shipped to Mexico immediately.

The ten refused to accept these terms and on the morning of October 3, 1961, sat down outside the headquarters building to wait for justice. Late that night, they sent the following telegram to Mexican Ambassador Antonio Carrillo Flores in Washington, D.C.:

We ten Mexican Agricultural Workers were brought to the United States with guarantees of fair treatment, including protection against being shipped back to Mexico unfairly. We have received very bad treatment at the camps where we have been staying: the Loduca and Perry Camp, the Calcagno Camp and a Tracy camp. But when we complained about the treatment, we were told to be quiet or else be sent back to Mexico. The San Joaquin Farm Production Association is now threatening to repatriate us against our will.

We have refused to go back to the filthy conditions, cursing, and bad treatment at these camps, and we have refused to be shipped back to Mexico before our contracts expire. We have some rights. But while we are trying to get our rights, the Association will not give us any food or shelter. We are sleeping on the ground tonight, outside the office of the Association. We will stay here, day and night, until our rights are recognized: including our right to elect our own representative. We want Raul Aguilar of the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee to represent us, but the mayordomos will not let him into the camps to talk to us. Aguilar has translated this telegram for us.

Please help us get justice. Do not let them send us back to Mexico, and do not let them treat us like animals in those camps any more. We call on you to please help us.

(signed)	AURELIO BAENA LAGUNAS	L-3571572
	APOLINAR ROSALES PEÑA	L-3688214
	TERESO RODRIGUEZ ADAME	L-3780956
	ANDRES AVILES GARCIA	L-3780953
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	RAFAEL SOTO RUBIO	L-3678256
	ZENAIDO FLORES PEREZ	L-3678258

AWOC officials and sympathizers furnished supper and breakfast to the strikers, and stayed with them through the night. Around 1:00 p.m., October 4th, Association officials persuaded the ten striking braceros to enter the Association office. The braceros were not allowed to bring their chosen representative, Raul Aguilar, of the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee, into the office.

At 4:00 p.m. they were released. They reported receiving an ultimatum from the Association: that they return to the same camps or go to Mexico that same afternoon. If they did neither, the Association would claim the braceros had deserted their contracts, and would ask the Border Patrol to arrest and deport them.

The local representative of the U.S. Department of Labor and the Mexican Consul in Sacramento both agreed to the ultimatum. Neither objected to the threatened violation of Article 30 of the Migrant Labor Agreement, which provides that "No Mexican worker shall be found to be violating....this Agreement unless such finding is made in the manner prescribed in this Article", such procedure allowing for appeals by braceros to the Mexican Ambassador.

The ten braceros, opposed even by the representatives of their own government, gave up and returned to the same camps where they say they are treated "like animals:"

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NOTE: One of the labor contracting firms involved in this strike, Loduca & Perry, has in recent months threatened physical violence to braceros who complained about wages and working conditions; denied medical treatment for five hours to braceros who were poisoned by infected meat furnished by the firm; attempted to deport complaining braceros to Mexico without just reason or due process before the end of their contracts; and refused to recognize representatives duly chosen by braceros as provided in the Migrant Labor Agreement.

Released by: Henry P. Anderson, Research
Director of AWOC and Acting
Chairman of the Northern
California Area Council of AWOC.